

My name is Dennis Osmer. I am a former Mayor of the City of Watsonville, California and currently represent the Pajaro Valley on the Santa Cruz County Planning Commission.

We are fortunate to have a radio station here that, in its format, operation and management epitomizes the best of service to the public trust and whose history exemplifies the difficulties of achieving such service in the face of unresponsive regulation. That station is KPIG 107.5 FM and the frequency is currently licensed to Mapleton Communications, led by President Adam Nathanson. The programming is eclectic to say the least. The music ranges from rock and roll to bluegrass. They do draw the line at classical. Their playlist is not set by a finance manager who has been promoted to Program Director, but by a longtime professional dedicated to diverse entertainment and the promoting the art and enjoyment of music in many forms. Local artists and those on the fringes of the mainstream music industry are featured (mostly live) and promoted. The DJs broadcast live and are involved in community events throughout the region. Though news aside from frequent traffic and weather reports is limited, diverse commentaries are encouraged and played regularly. It is a local station, run by local people who belong to an endangered species: independent broadcasters. While this station has been helped to survive by Mapleton Communications, there is a constant threat from market forces and absent regulation. In the history of the station, and by station I mean the people dedicated to the local format and their local audience, the fire of consolidation, fueled by the FCC has burned them again and again. The commission has heard the stories before, so I won't detail the history. But what is important is that it is almost impossible to operate a truly responsive local station in the face of the trend toward market monopolization.

The FCC has all but abandoned regulation in favor of allowing market control. I am a confirmed capitalist myself, but there is a role for government to play when the public interest may not be served. It's not communism or terrorism, it's common sense for the common good. Regulations must be applied that not only preserve, but promote independent local stations. Having the freedom of choice is of no use without choice.

I would like to close by asking that you consider instituting a process of license review by local communities. Each region of the country is represented by a regional council of governments - in our case it is the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments. These Councils have the ability to serve as a point of local input, similar to how they are used by the Federal Highway Administration for the purpose of determining local transportation priorities. In any event, you are not without options in serving the public good by offering greater local influence on broadcasting options.